

THE FRESCOES OF
DIEGO RIVERA



DIEGO RIVERA

Photograph by Edward Weston

THE FRESCOES OF DIEGO RIVERA

INTRODUCTION BY ERNESTINE EVANS

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THE FRESCOES OF DIEGO RIVERA

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ON the walls of the Ministry of Education in Mexico City and of the National Agricultural Academy at Chapingo, Diego Rivera has set in fresco all of the Mexican land and people that is significant. The painful story of Indian Mexico is here communicated by a great artist. There are no scenes from history. There is no representation of the future unless the panel of the garlanded tractor be taken so. But Rivera has so chosen his subjects from the present, so looked upon the visible world about him, and in a time of social revolution, so profoundly felt what he has seen, that the future seems to be revealed. Whatever the immediate political future of his country, the frescoes stand as revelation and knowledge of the forces that made the Mexican revolution, and the vision that was theirs at the moment of triumph. "Erase the walls" was rightly one of the slogans of the de la Huerta counter-revolution, but there can be no erasure from the minds and hearts that have once beheld them.

From many quarters of the world, travelers who are almost pilgrims have already begun to journey to see these frescoes. There are painters and architects and students of art to whom the walls proclaim a new

era in painting; there are leaders and propagandists of social revolution who, from whatever land, and however ignorant of the art of painting, understand and are refreshed by the visions in the Ministry patios; historians and lovers of ancient Mexico recognize at once that however indebted to Europe for technique the artist has been, the vitality in the frescoes owes far more to the Indian classical tradition of the old monuments, and the pure esthetic zest of the popular arts and the daily life of the Indian nation.

Chapingo is a two-hour journey from the capitol. The traveler goes first to the Ministry of Education on the Avenida Argentina, several blocks down from the Plaza de la Constitucion, the vast cathedral square that roughly coincides with the heart of the old Aztec city. The Ministry building was one of the first achievements of the Obregón régime, and is finely built after the fashion of the colonial monasteries, with two large patios where audiences of ten thousand people may gather for fiesta. A single pine rises at the end of the second court and seems to draw the eye to the jeweled tiles on the towered dome.

As you pass from the street with its merchants of colored gelatine and peanuts, and its darting camions full of barefoot peasants, and come through the darkened portico into the first courtyard, you do not

at first see any single picture. The impression is of warmth and color, glistening white and red, sweeps of dun and yellow, greens and blues and blacks. The clatter of country school teachers on their way to headquarters or coming down the stairs with cotton salary-sacks of silver pesos fills the air.

The frescoes of the higher galleries appear to rise unbroken from those of the ground floor. All the walls are celebrations of the Indian masses. The pictures on the court depict the work-life of the common people, the rhythm of whose bending backs, and lifting arms at sowing, shoveling, hammering, and reaping is the major rhythm of the nation's life. On the second tier the subjects are chosen from the intellectual life. Where below are the workers at the blast furnace, or the women of Tehuantepec dyeing their flax; above are the hammer and sickle, the tools of laboratories, the devices of philosophy. On the topmost floor the color warms again; the frescoes reflect the spiritual life of the people. From among their martyrs, Rivera has chosen to paint those whom the peons in song and proverb had first elected, Cuahuatemoc, Emiliano Zapata, Montañó, and Felipe Carrillo.

The walls of the second patio are given over to the popular festivals and communal gatherings of the Indian masses. The Day of the Dead is there and the

feast of Santa Anita, when the flower-laden barges go down the canal, which is the old fete of Xochipilli and Xochiquetzalli, the Aztec gods of rejuvenation, under a Christian veil. Three panels describe the Tiangas, the peasant markets at which the Indians trade in kind. These fairs repeat themselves four times a year at the turn of the season as they have from time immemorial before the conquest; every week there are little markets where, as on the walls, one can see the stacked cane and melons and chirimoyas. The rhythm of trade and gossip runs through the pictures. The panels at the end show the sweep of a May-day celebration, red banners and singing men, a vast concourse of faces. Here and there is a recognizable portrait of some well known politician, the rest, the known unknown — the common people illumined by their cause. The day of Judas shines from the walls; rockets and fireworks explode the images of the people's betrayers. There is the Day of the Dead, half feast and half mourning, fragrant with sampasuchile, flower of the buried one. There is the Day of the Little Dead with its tables spread with baked loaves in the form of toys for the children to play with on their holiday from the grave. On the walls are the peons of feudal haciendas gathered for a dividing of the land, and farther down the same wall are the ancient Aztec ceremonies of the corn

In September when the corn is ripe the Indians choose the stalk with the most ears and set it like a cross upon a Little Mountain of their harvest. They sit around about and eat the feast of Tlastoc, the Aztec god of rain.

On one wall is a Yaqui Indian dance, sketched first by Diego near Puebla. In the center is a pot in which a sheep is being cooked. Two Indians, one wearing the mask of an old man and one in the mask of a deer, depict the struggle between hunter and animal, between death and life. Around the legs of the dancers are snake-skins filled with glass that rattles. In the hand of the deer is a gourd of noisy stones; the old one wears a belt of empty cartridges. In the background of the picture the dead chief swings upon a mat slung from four poles.

Above in the second patio are the shields of the states of the Mexican Union—the work, whether temporary or permanent is not yet certain, of another painter.

The top gallery is Rivera's again. He has chosen a people's corrido, half ballad, half political exhortation, and swung the words of it on ribands above his expressions of faith in the people and their power to make and possess the earth. The end walls are ecstatic, peasants singing, soldiers in the rain, men at work in

the fields. Painted in the spring of 1927, there is about them an ardour and a peace that abruptly ends. The panels as the corrido turns the corner to the right wall of the third gallery have another quality, lyric sarcasm, outrageous boldness of conception, epitome of the conflict in the Mexico the painter reflected.

The color is as bright. There is a spread table in design not different from the tender panel on the first floor of the Feast of the Little Dead, but the banquet is a bourgeois family's. Pale and sleek personages sit at a feast with golden pesos on their plates. The walls are crowded. Another table scene shows John D. Rockefeller drinking milk, extravagantly décolleté women, scrolls of ticker tape, the Statue of Liberty like a toy upon the table. This is cartoon elevated into art, and art become a weapon.

The next picture, beneath the legend "Son las siete de la noche y el pobre está recostado, duerme un sueño muy tranquilo porque se encuentra cansado," shows a soldier and a peasant reading by an old-fashioned coach lantern. The others are sleeping in the foreground, huddled over maize sacks. Among them a number of children, a little dog. The most outstanding figure of the sleeping group is a man in a vast red serape. Hidden, peering from behind the bushes, are a priest, an officer, and a politician, gazing

at the simple scene enviously. Third comes a wall where the peasants are picking apples; one is teaching several others to read. There is again a politician, priests, and a money-bag. The ladders and bench are homely rough-hewn affairs. Straw-color and brick-red predominate. The fourth scene shows the soldiers and peasants with rifles and crisscrossed cartridge belts, coming to end a scene of champagne-drinking. One pallid youth in a dress-suit, with his pale elongated manicured hands on a bottle, lies drunken. Dawn is emerging over the rim of the hills. There are the customary number of décolleté women. The mountains are dawn-purple. A man in a silk hat is giving a girl champagne to drink.

II

Next comes a farm scene, blueprints, compasses, a surveyor's outfit, the red and white sighting pole. Above is the motto, "All the wealth in the world comes from the soil." In the background is a tractor.

Underneath the legend, "No quiere ya revoluciones ni palabras sin sentido, quiere solo garantias para su hogar tan querido," a soldier stabs a priest with a bayonet. The priest has on his robe a blood-red heart out of which sprout the customary cross and a dollar sign. Two Indian girls with healthy home-made brooms are sweeping out a fat dead priest.

There is a plump boy in white cottons in the foreground.

The next is an ensemble of workers and peasants with machinery, the women with a sewing-machine, soldiers working, a radio, a tractor, and an aeroplane flying overhead.

All this is repulsive to many who accept without a shudder the Indian picture-writing of the old codices with the gouged hearts and rended limbs of Indian religion and warfare, and Spanish conquest. Even when Rivera alternates his visions of conflict, and of the land at peace, the rhythm is frightening.

Returning from these latest of the walls to the frescoes painted four years before in the first patio, their serenity moves the observer with a new anguish, lest this paradise be lost.

The Mexican land and the Mexican people—how beautiful they are! The walls of the first patio portray the industries of north and south. The metal is fiery red in the steel furnaces of Monterey. A miner in Guanajuato spreads his arms for the daily humiliating search of his pockets and casts the shadow of a free man's crucifixion. Against the background of field and mountains, mountains that seem more real than any I have climbed, Indian women in their rebosos wait for the final days of harvest. Here on the wall is the little circle of a school where old and

young are taught their letters, guarded by the symbolic figure of a young soldier on horseback. Toward the south are the sugar-makers and the growers of cane, the weavers of cotton and flax, and the dyers who first made royal purple from the little snails on cocoa trees.

The central stairway depicts the journey from sea-level at Vera Cruz up through the tropics and the wonderful mountain ways of Orizaba to the plateau where the valley of Mexico is ringed by snow-capped volcanoes. Here is the jungle a little as Rousseau saw it with the same naive passion for its mysterious exuberance. An unforgettable woman of Tehuantepec is there, and up the stair, workers burying a comrade, and an ironic landscape of owner and hacienda. All of the Mexican land is here, all of the Mexican story.

III

Diego Rivera was born on December 8, 1886, in Guanajuato, famous as a silver-mining town, and capitol of the state of Guanajuato. He was christened Diego María Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez, and never again called anything but Diego Rivera. His political faith was predestined by the town he was born in, for Guanajuato had passed its heyday. At one time a flourishing and riotous mining town of 100,000 inhabitants, it had begun to shrink. Less

than 4000 people are left there now. It is a city of empty houses, and in Diego's childhood, it was already a city of lock-outs and unemployment, of safe mine-owners and insecure workers. The houses were adobe, made of mud from the smelting works, whose primitive processes left so much silver in the mud that an American company is now remining the deserted houses of the town.

Diego's father was the son of Spanish parents; his mother, daughter of an Indian father and a Spanish mother. His grandfather on his father's side had been chief of military administration under Juarez and a romantic figure in childhood stories. The grandfather in turn had tales of a Rivera who had been with Napoleon at the gates of Moscow, and of Inez Acosta of Portugal, and of Italian blood in the family's veins. Diego's father talked less of family and romance. He was a Mason, a Jacobin, and anti-clerical, and it was of such things the father spoke to the engineers on the railroad while Diego sat in the engine cabin and imagined himself the master of throttles and levers. The elder Rivera was a chemist who worked in the mines and taught in a primary school a part of each year. He was friendly with the governor of the state, and entered into many conferences about the building of rural schools. He edited a small paper called *El Dem-*

ócrata, was nominated for deputy, and declined. The little newspaper voiced the complaints of the workers as the town continued to shrink. The mother of the family, too, complained that Guanajuato was dying. She was no Jacobin. She had been born into a pious Catholic family, and she grew more pious as the years passed. She fretted over the provincial life of the family. The father left his post and invested everything in a silver mine, called The Peach, but it was a bad and watery one.

When Diego was six, the Riveras moved to Mexico City. The mother had her way, and if the family affairs did not greatly increase in prosperity, the father at least had new dreams. The child was eight and had made an army of 5000 paper soldiers. Surely the son was a military genius! A bonus for a military scholarship was secured. But Diego never went. There were evening classes in drawing at the Academy of San Carlos. The boy began to feel himself most at home when he drew. He made the acquaintance of José Guadalupe Posada, "the greatest artist in post-conquest Mexico," Diego will tell you, and describe his work as illustrator of corridos and pastorals for the publishing house of Varnegas Arroyo. Truly, one should date the renascence of modern Mexican art from Posada, for his was that redis-

covery of, and devotion to, the Indian that has transformed and nourished the revolutionary painters. Here first, and at the proper time, came to Diego a love for the songs of the people, a respect for their choice of heroes, a sharing of their pain, and an attention to their paintings on pulqueria walls, and ex-votos on cathedral and chapel alters. There was as yet no school of appreciation of these things. There was Posada, his knowledge and enthusiasm, and a boy's sharing of his friend's delight in the world about them, a world for the most part unseen by middle-class Mexicans.

In 1898 Diego went to work in the studio of Felix Para, an academic painter, certainly, but a lover of the pre-Hispanic classical tradition in sculpture and in building. If there were no remaining fragments of Aztec painting for Diego to turn to, there was yet much for a painter to learn from Aztec sculpture, from an art that was a force, alive, the very religion of a people. In its contemplation lay the seed for discontent with the painting of his day. What could canvasses have in common with the speaking stillness of a sculptured Aztec god?

Still, he must learn to paint, as the world about him called painting and accepted it. He went into the country with crayons to live with the dust-colored

landscape and the purple hills and the Indians of the mountain pueblos, and he brought back to the exposition organized by Dr. Gerardo Murido (known as Dr. Atl) a small collection of crayons and oils, that were not only exhibited but sold. With the money from this first success, and with a grant of three hundred francs a month from the liberal governor of the state of Vera Cruz, he set off for Spain. This pensioning, in the Italian tradition, was nothing new in Mexico, for in the days before Diaz, in the days of the common lands, it was the custom for those who surpassed in the arts to be sent on scholarships to the school of arts, and to return with a sort of status as leaders of the people. The Governor of Vera Cruz was under the cloud of Diaz' displeasure and said to be tolerant of peasant uprisings and active in encouraging the organization of the textile workers. He was a sympathetic patron for a young Latin painter, whose head was buzzing with ideas, setting forth to see the world.

"Naturally," he probably said, when some word came of the young Rivera not only visiting the galleries and imitating portraits by Velasquez, Goya, Titian, and Bellini, but roistering and talking all night with anarchist circles in Madrid, "he is young." Diego was young, and he had got himself on the rosters of

the European police, and found comrades from many walks of life. Only one painter pleased him — Dario Regoyos, the post-impressionist landscape painter.

In one of the churches of Guanajuato there had been a painting of St. Philip Neri, accredited to Goya. At night the student talked in taverns; by day he sought out canvasses by Goya. He hardly painted at all. The truth is, he was timid, and he was homesick. His esthetic roots were in Mexico. He liked no other painting but Regoyos'. He was discontented with himself and with his fellow painters. He set off on travels, now afoot and now mounted, to Portugal, and through the Spanish provinces. Of his life in Spain this was the best. A thirst to see was upon him, and a hunger to know of the life of the common people. He painted little and sketched much. On his return to the capitol, he failed in three attempts to copy a portrait by Velasquez and one by Ribera el Español. He could not break himself to technique so strange to him. He could falsify the master's style, but could not subject himself to true copying.

In 1907 he entered the studio of Eduardo Chicharro, since become the director of the Spanish Academy, but though he worked with love and patience and application, and produced landscapes with picturesque figures in them, and much yellow soil, he

accomplished little. His dissatisfaction grew. He would leave Spain and set out for France and England, with some comrades.

Direct from the Paris railway station, they went to the shop of Clovis Sagot. In the window was a large harlequin of Picasso's and a still life by Derain, and one by Braque. Now they knew why they had come to Paris. Within the week Diego had gone to the Gallery Vollard. In the window there was a painting by Cezanne, the landscape with the old man and his pipe. All morning long Diego stood there walking up and down, looking, looking, excited as he had never been before. At noon, M. Vollard went out to luncheon, and noted without favor the young admirer. When he came back, Rivera was still there, peering, squinting; and somewhat annoyed, the proprietor removed the picture and put another there. But, it, too, was a Cezanne. And so the afternoon went, with changing pictures. The excited loiterer could not be uninterested in any of them. This was more nearly a revelation in painting than any he had ever had. It was not merely the way of painting, but the choice of subject, the worker models. They were a distillation of the world that he had seen himself, the world he had talked about in Madrid taverns. He went less often to museums. Even the pictures in the Louvre

seemed elegant, cold, exotic. How he wanted to meet Picasso! He spoke to his comrades from Spain about Cézanne and about Picasso, and they began to quarrel about painting, and their quarrels were bitter and violent.

When he went to Brittany to work, his landscapes were not Brittany at all, though he tried to make them so. They were faint, pale memories of Mexico. He did not want to be influenced by the painters he had met in Paris. Yet he produced nothing of his own. He had never produced anything that was his own. He moved on to Brussels and there found the canvasses of Pieter Breughel the elder. This was nearer to him than Cézanne, and yet satisfying in the same way. He was content to be a painter. With two comrades, he went on to England, and though of his stay there he remembers scarcely a painting, the weeks in London made some permanent alteration in the student of life and art. He was young. He was Latin and American; anarchism was for him the natural protest. What did he know of organization? What shocked him most in London was the careful way his landlady kept food apart in the rubbish that it might go to the poor.

What he thought he saw was a whole society of which misery was an organized and accepted part.

No illusion of lottery nor any quibble about God's plan. He spent days watching the workmen on the docks, crossing London Bridge at night, coming to sleep on the Embankment. "I felt," he says, "the power of human organization in a negative sense." Protest was not enough. The reorganization of society occupied his mind. He paid his last visit to the British Museum. He bought his first copy of Marx.

In Paris he and his Spanish comrades returned to their quarrels about art. He had met Picasso and was soon to ally himself with that group. The Mexican colony in Paris was seething with rumors that a revolution was being prepared against Diaz. Still, most of them did not believe it would happen; and when Diego returned in October, 1910, to Mexico City, it was to hold an exhibit and to make new financial arrangements. On the very day his exhibit opened, in the midst of the festivities for the hundredth anniversary of Mexican Independence, fighting in the Madero revolution broke out. The exhibit rooms became at once a rendezvous for José Vasconcelos, the leader of many students' and workers' secret clubs for the making of oral propaganda. At the conclusion of the exhibition, Diego set off to Morelos "to paint."

I remember one of many stories he has told me

of the weeks that followed. He had come to Amecameca at the time of the pilgrimages to the sacred mountain. He had made friends with the sacristan and taken up his work of painting the volcanoes on the road along the precipice. More than twenty thousand pilgrims had gathered in the town on Palm Sunday, and he thought to himself, "What a moment to make propaganda for the revolution!" Yet he was surprised when the sacristan, returning with two burros loaded with pigskins of water, came close to him and murmured, "You are here to give us news. All here expect your message."

"Yes, I am going to speak."

"All that you say may bring danger to these people and to yourself. But no, you know Madero."

"It is certain that Madero is coming, and he is with the people." Three persons who heard him say this came up to him, and each said, "Is that true? Then go to the circus tonight." Together in Amecameca were two comrades. He told them of the morning's episode, and they were disquieted; but all three went to the circus that night and found themselves seats beside the ring. When a number was announced as "A Man of Fire, the Indian Tahuraamara Mannu," the crowd stirred. And an Indian came out with a wheelbarrow of flaming coals and bars of metal in the coals,

and walked about, singing an Indian song in a language Diego could not understand. The Indian took an earthen dish and went to Diego. "Give me two bullets," he asked, and taking the bullets that were given him, he put them in a dish on the coals, and as they waited, bent a bar of the red-hot metal with his foot. The lead in the dish melted, and the Indian took the lead and bit it with his teeth, and when he took it out of his mouth it had teeth prints on it, and he offered it to one in the audience who would not accept it. Then he turned to Diego, and Diego knew he must take it, at least. It burned him terribly. The Indian said, "It is you. You can tell the friends of Mexico to tell Madero that all from here are ready." Then he ran and took the wheelbarrow of coals and dropped the coals, making a path of them, and began to dance on the path of coals. After a few steps his white trousers caught fire, but he went over the path of coals, and he was quite unhurt. Thousands saw this thing. At a signal from the Indian all left the circus. Diego and his friends went back to the house where they were staying and tried to sleep. Shortly before dawn there was a great hammering at the door, and the landlady ran to them saying, "I do not know what is happening. There are many on horseback before the door. Maybe you wish to make an escape." But

no, they wished to defend themselves, and so with their guns, they opened a crack in the door to the patio.

"Quien viva . . . Long live who?" And in answer, his father's voice, "It is I, you rascal." And his father told him that in Totolapa there were seven thousand revolutionary soldiers, recruited, many of them, from among the pilgrims. Diego, still mystified, told his father his story, but his father only said "I cannot believe you. But a good revolutionary quality is discretion, and among all these people there are surely some very good people."

This was no painter's season with Diego, but it was fantastic in its richness, and much of what he came to use ten years later was garnered before he went back to Paris with a stipend from the new government.

In Paris he threw himself vigorously into the cubist movement. Diego is still a cubist in that he believes cubism is the most important single achievement in plastic art since the Renaissance. He does not change his opinion that the genius of Picasso lay in that he saw clearly and explained for the first time in modern life that hidden universal structure which other great artists had perceived but could not explain.

Then came the war. Painting was not so important. And again, painting was the only thing left in the world. Now he offered himself for the army, and was rejected. There were weeks of furious painting, and months of unproductiveness and common labor in a mechanic's shop. He had married the Russian painter Angelina, and with the Russian political refugees who were in Paris, he learned the language of revolution and waited for the war to bring forth something more than carnage and national victory. In 1917 he was painting again, with a firmer sense of structure, but it is not yet his own work. He has fallen again under the influence of Cézanne and under that of Renoir, too. His friendship with Elie Faure dates from shortly after the Armistice. With him there is a rich exchange of ideas and experience. He went to Perquiz to paint, and though he paints almost photographically, again his nostalgia is upon him, and the landscape seems to be of Mexican scenes. His fellow cubists excommunicate him for being a heretic and a deserter, a celebrator of the exotic; and Rosenberg, the cubist dealer, after a polemic in the press, breaks a contract with him.

If he lost his affiliation with a group, he gained his freedom, and nothing could take away from him that which in cubism was necessary to his growth.

In the series of portraits he painted in 1919, it is plain that again he is trying to divine the secrets of the masters. He is not yet Rivera, but the pupil of David and Holbein. He goes again and again to Elie Faure. They talk of the social function of art. Slowly the young Mexican draws to the close of his disorientation, and his period of experiment. His interest in society, and his practice of his art, begin to coalesce. All over Europe the air is tremulous with social change. The painter begins to feel himself aware of the great creative forces of his time. He is no longer interested in the amenities of art, nor in the manners of society. News from Mexico was news of revolution. He left Dordogne, where he had been painting, and went for his final journey before his return as a mature painter to root himself in his native soil.

In Italy, life and art seemed plain, and painting a part of everybody's life. He travelled from Turin to Milan and Verona, to Venice, Trieste, and Florence. He visited Ravenna. He paused to study the Mexican codices brought to Italy by the Franciscans. He made three hundred and fifty drawings of Byzantine mosaics. He sketched from the life about him and copied Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Etruscan vases, and journeyed to Pompeii.

He had the painter's sense of power, seeing Gi-

otto's frescoes for the first time. Fresco he recognized as the high estate of painting. Easel pictures became to him unnatural. Only by restoration to a right relation to the sister art of architecture could painting proclaim herself again. The year in Italy was more than this in fructification and clarification. All up and down the peninsula from Florence to Naples, Fascists and Communists were fighting for control. To Diego there was but one side. As he sketched the frescoes in the catacombs at Rome, he felt their freshness and promise to have some kinship with the promise of the Communist workers who were striking in Milan.

Upon his return to Paris he was eager to be off. Some of his pictures he sold to Pani, who arranged for his return to Mexico. He came back to Mexico with a dream of painting the walls of a workers' school, and made proposals to Obregón. What he conceived was a school where all the processes of education should be esthetically carried on. That same José Vasconcelos who had organized students' clubs in 1910 was now Obregón's Minister of Education. His twofold policy was for a campaign against the black illiteracy of the peons, to be carried on by missionary teachers in the most inaccessible pueblos; and for support and stimulation of the fine arts. Obregón's response to Diego's plan for a perfect workers' school

was immediate, but the money was diverted to a more general building program. To the painters Vasconcelos gave the walls of the National Preparatory School. The group that was later to call itself the syndicate of painters began to work. They were united by their sympathies in the social struggle. They all went to the Indian for the matter of their painting. Led by Rivera, they resolved to abandon canvas for fresco alone. On the government payrolls they were put down as teachers, clerks, inspectors of drawing. Their business was to paint. They had money enough for food, for quarters in the poorer part of the town, and for a little drink. Some of the painters had studied in Europe. Some, like Clemente José Orozco, had served the revolution in the army. Jean Charlot, a Frenchman, Alfaro Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, Amada de la Cueva, Fermin Revueltos, were of their number. Today the big encaustic in the auditorium of The National Preparatory School seems heavy and formal in its symbolism, describing the forces of creation, the Man and the Woman beneath the zodiac; but the figures, and still more the faces, retain their vitality.

The syndicate was one in intention more than in fact. Looking backward, Rivera would say that only under a more truly revolutionary government could the syndicate have become a real trade union of art-

ists working for a unity of art. In the beginning the painters of the syndicate demanded walls for each other; they were united in politics as well as in their task of painting, and *The Machete*, since become the organ of the Mexican Communist party, led all the press in demanding full measure of social revolution. Defending themselves against middle-class Mexico, which, horrified that painters should find in the despised peon matter for art, called them the Ugliests and threatened their walls, their syndicate's unity gave them strength. But the painters were various in talent, and when free of outside pressure, differed in the heat of their social faith; whereas the first contracts had been let to the syndicate as a whole, the second year of painting in the Secretariat of Education, the government would sign but with Rivera alone. There may be esthetic gain in having one master brush for the patios, but in theory at least the artists have lost their place as an organized craft. Clemente Orozco has painted magnificently on the walls of the Preparatory School, the young Maximo Pacheco paints murals in the rural schools, Alfaro Siqueiros spends more time in organizing workers in Jalisco than in painting, Xavier Guerrero uses his art entirely as a weapon in revolutionary newspapers. Rivera has found an assistant in the young American painter,

Paul Higgins, from San Francisco.

IV

The National Agricultural Academy of Chapingo was once the hacienda of one of the oldest Mexican feudal families, that of the Marquis Vivanco. Before passing to public use as an agrarian school where agricultural cadets from all the states are trained for teaching and experimental work, on government grant, much as our naval and military cadets are trained, it had been seized through enforced sale by Diaz' figurehead president, General González.

The famous wall of the division of the Land is at the head of the stairway of the main building, flanked by sweeping panoramic scenes of revolutionary warfare in the oil fields, and on the haciendas.

What was once the chapel of the hacienda has been decorated by Rivera with a highly symbolized, philosophical conception of the world, and the processes of man's conquest of it. Three miles across the dusty fields from Chapingo is one of the earliest Catholic churches in Mexico. It is built on the pyramidal base of an old Aztec temple, and in its doorway, pagan idols are overgrown with grass. Returning from a walk to its disheveled beauty, the chapel at Chapingo seems but the repetition of a social process. In the old choir, where formerly saints and

holy water font were part of the present, is a representation of the elements, fire, the winds, the little clouds, and a moving symbolic figure of virgin soil. Man is not yet.

The chapel is divided into three parts in which are recorded the stages of social revolution. Agriculture is shown enslaved by clericalism, militarism, and capitalism. Scenes of preparation for revolt, of martyrdom, and of revolution completed, beneath great symbolic hands, suppliant, clenched to strike and uplifted in benediction, face walls that describe the forces of nature, beneath the soil, in germination, and in full earthly fruit.

The culmination is in the end wall, a luminous vision of earth liberated, of man in control of the forces of nature, and master of the machine. Rivera has more than once explained to me in detail the symbolism of this wall. And often I have wondered whether the precise identification of the four birds with the four seasons, and the human child as symbol of balance between man and woman, were not rationalizations, after and not before the design, from which the beholder gets so pure an emotion of spiritual triumph and order in what erstwhile had been a confusing modern world of unsubdued forces.

These pictures must be seen. It is not possible to describe the feelings they have the power to arouse. To artists and to the rank and file of mankind alike, here is a painter who lives in a new era.

FRESCOES
in the
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MEXICO CITY
First Patio



THE COURT OF LABOR



THE COURT OF LABOR



THE DEATH OF THE PEON



THE NEW SCHOOL



PEASANTS WAITING FOR THE HARVEST



SKETCH FOR POOR PEASANTS



GOING DOWN TO THE MINE



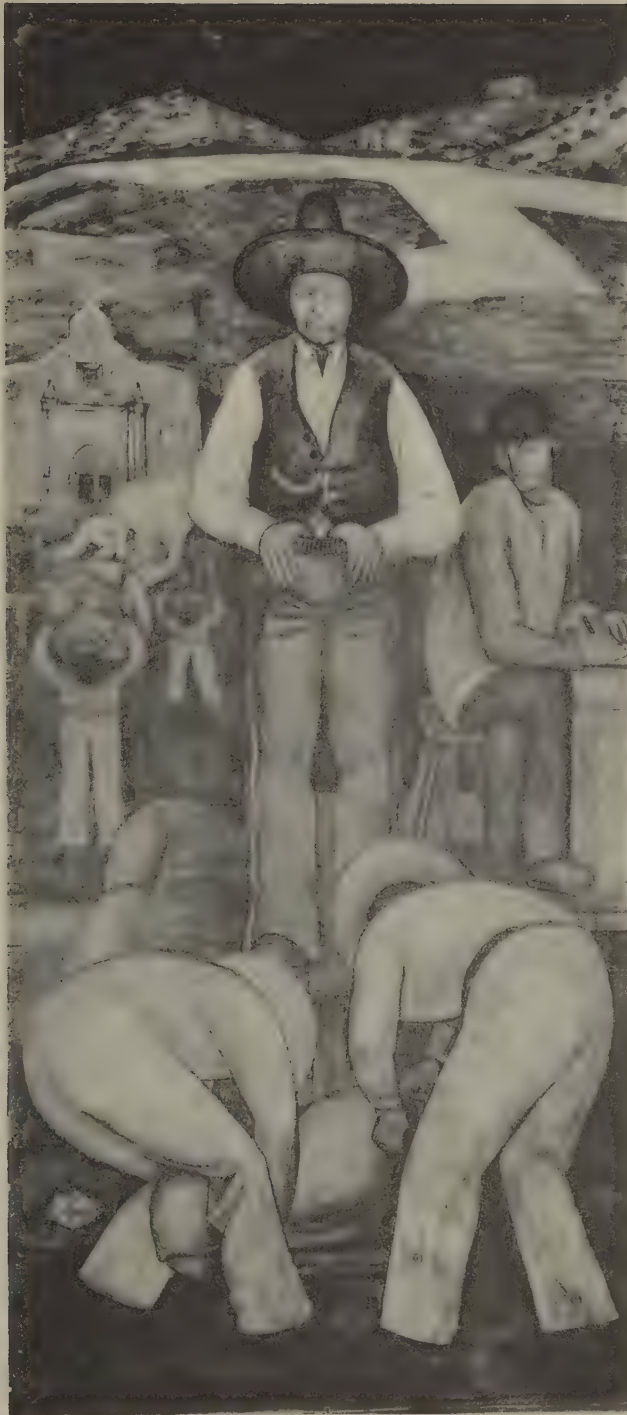
COMING OUT OF THE MINE



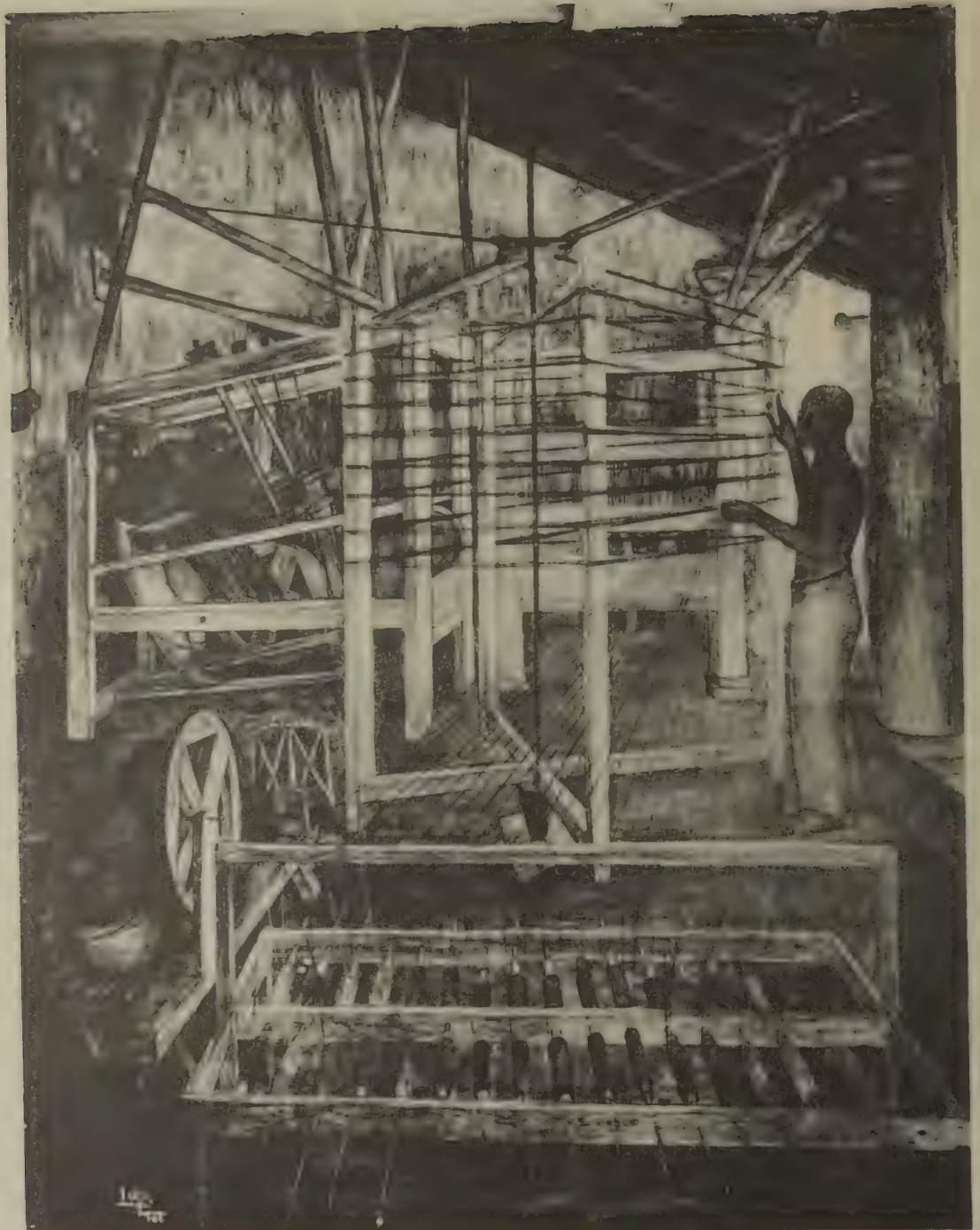
THE SUGAR REFINERS



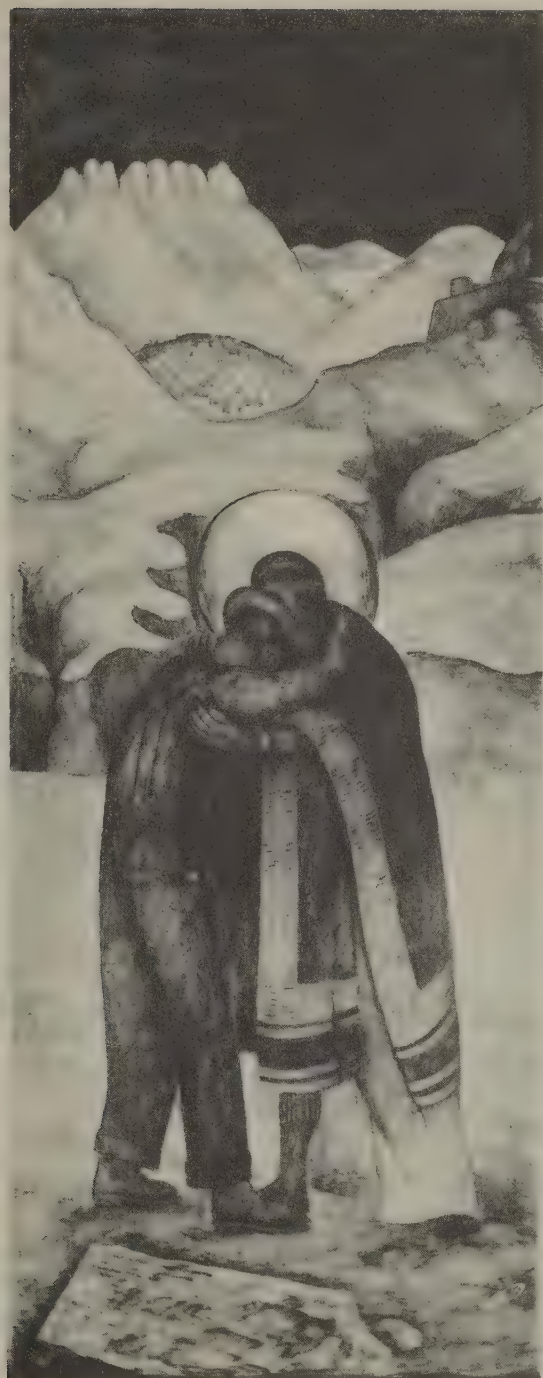
MINERS



OVERSEER WEIGHING THE PEASANTS' GRAIN



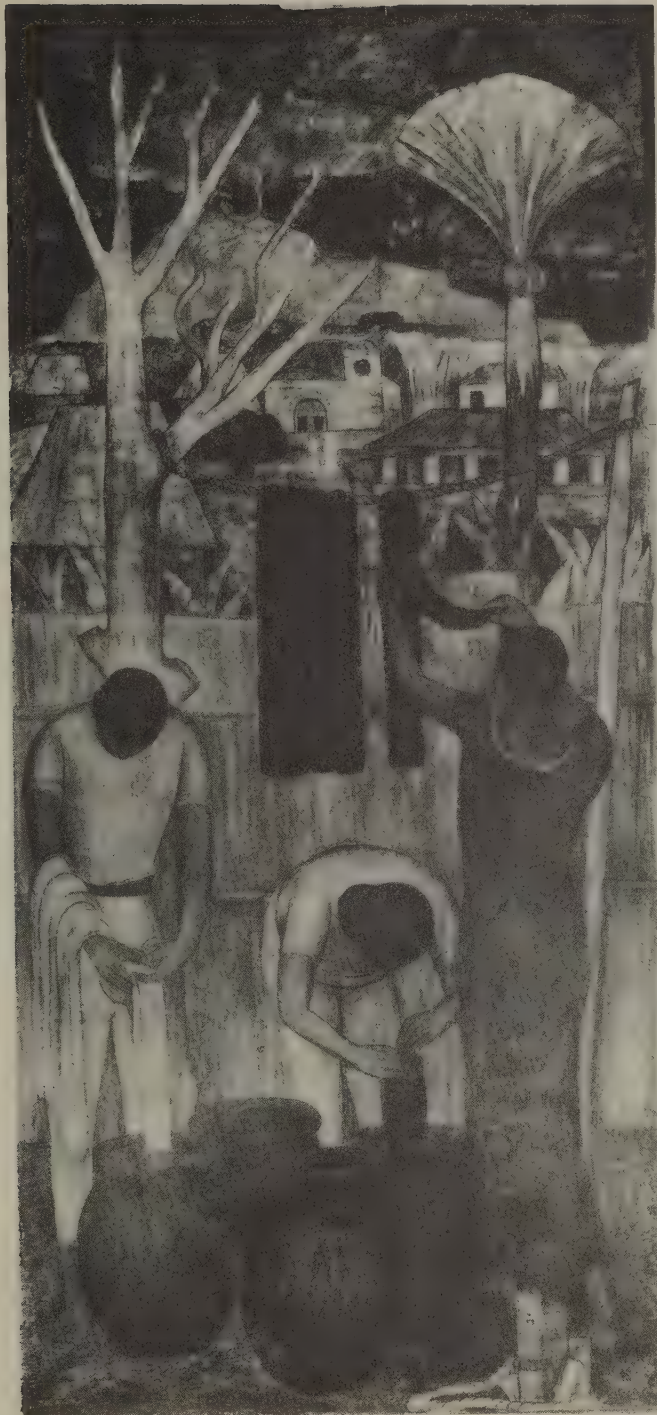
WEAVERS



WORKER AND PEASANT



HARVEST OF SUGAR CANE



DYERS



YAQUI INDIAN CEREMONIAL—DANCE OF THE DEER



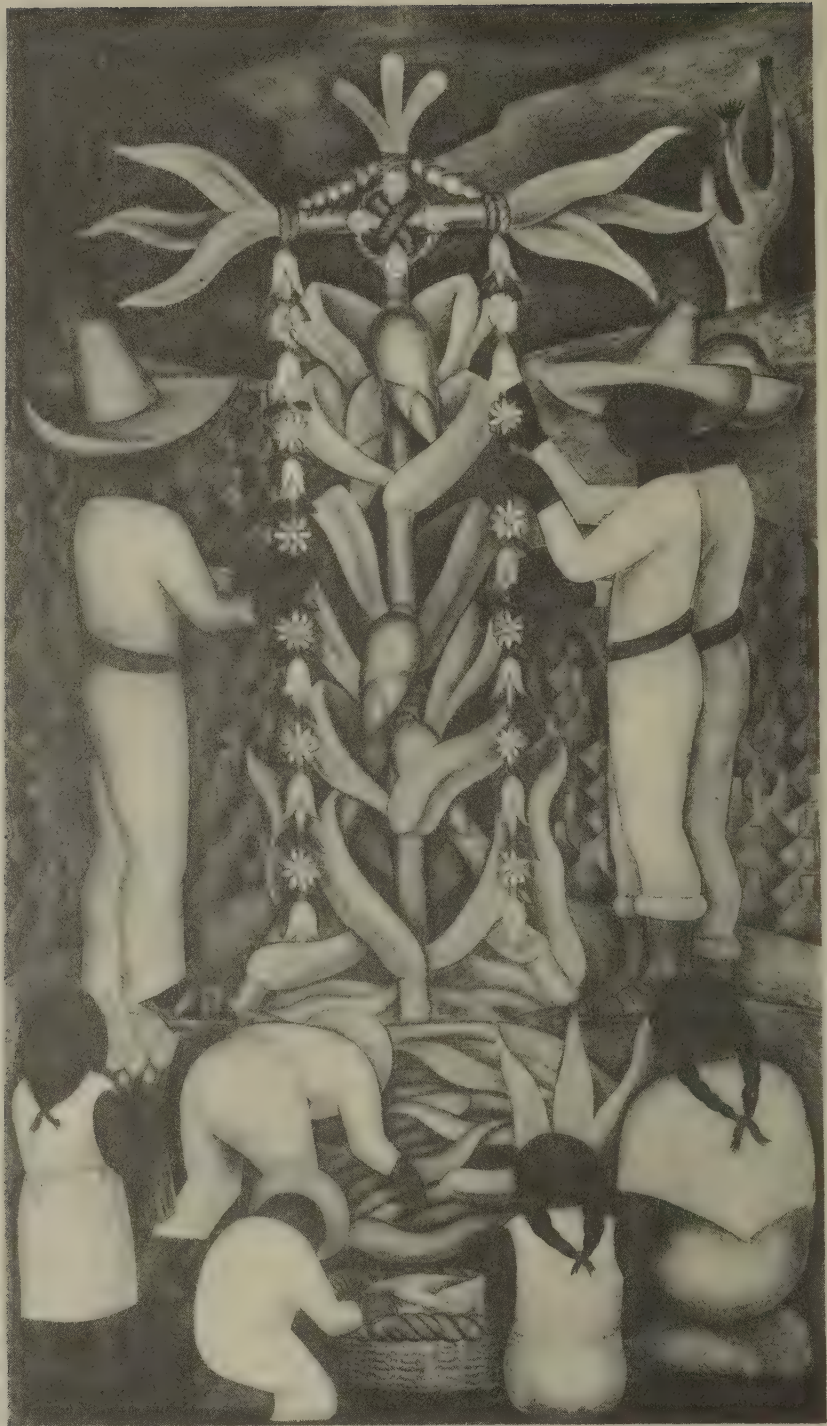
IRON FOUNDRY



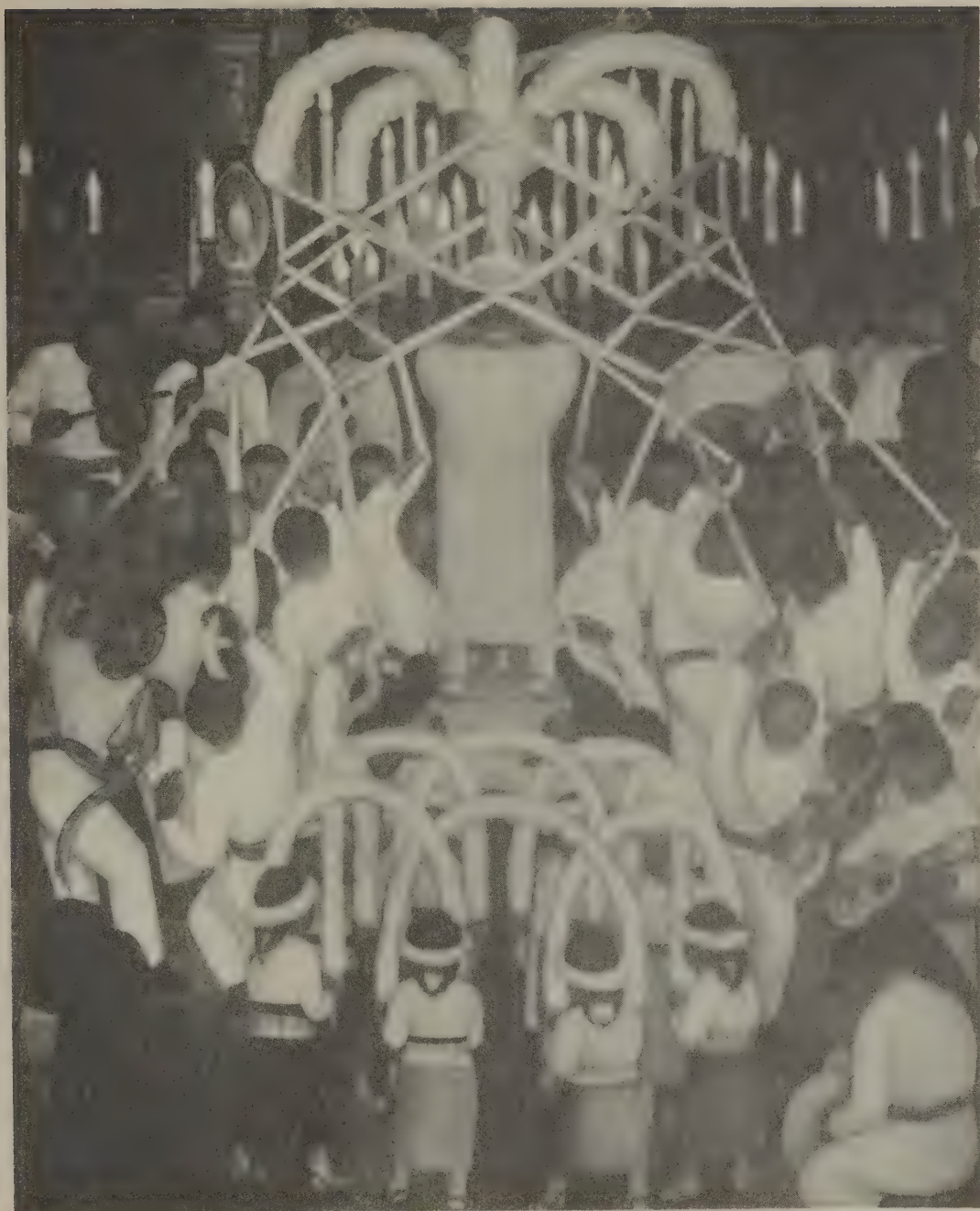
THE COURT OF FESTIVALS—PANELS CELEBRATING THE DISTRIBUTION
OF THE LAND AMONG THE PEASANTS



THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND — DETAIL



HARVEST FESTIVAL



FESTIVAL IN JALISCO



THE DAY OF THE LITTLE DEAD—IN THE COUNTRY



THE DAY OF THE DEAD—IN THE COUNTRY



THE DAY OF THE DEAD—IN THE CITY



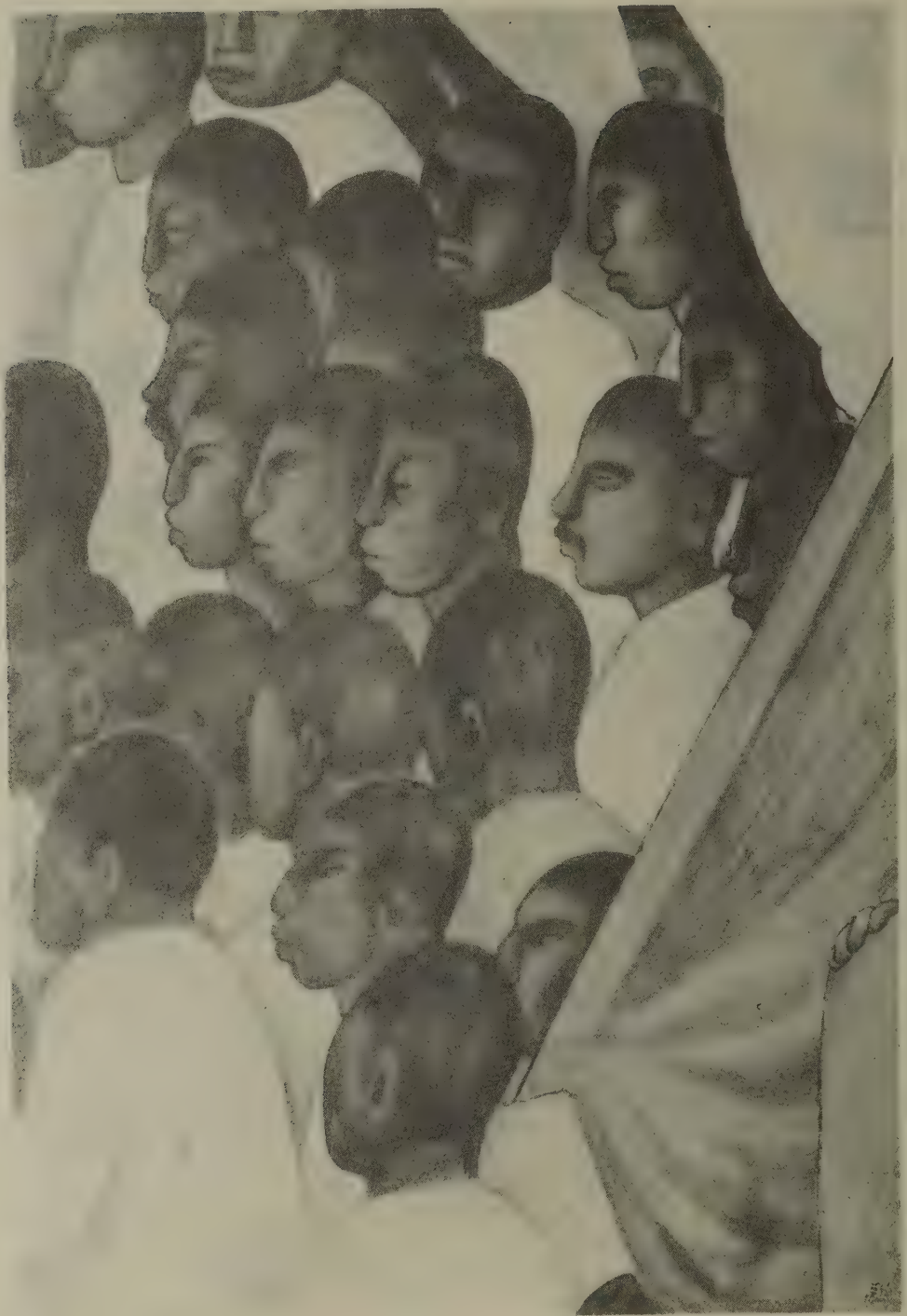
DETAIL OF FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD—IN THE CITY



THE DAY OF THE JUDASES



TWO OF THE THREE PANELS OF THE WORKERS' CELEBRATION OF THE
FIRST OF MAY



THE FIRST OF MAY—DETAIL



THE FIRST OF MAY—DETAIL



THE FIRST OF MAY—DETAIL



FESTIVAL OF THE FLOWERS AT SANTA ANITA



FESTIVAL OF THE FLOWERS—DETAIL



MARKET DAY



DETAIL OF MARKET DAY



ZANDUNGA — INDIAN DANCE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MEXICO CITY

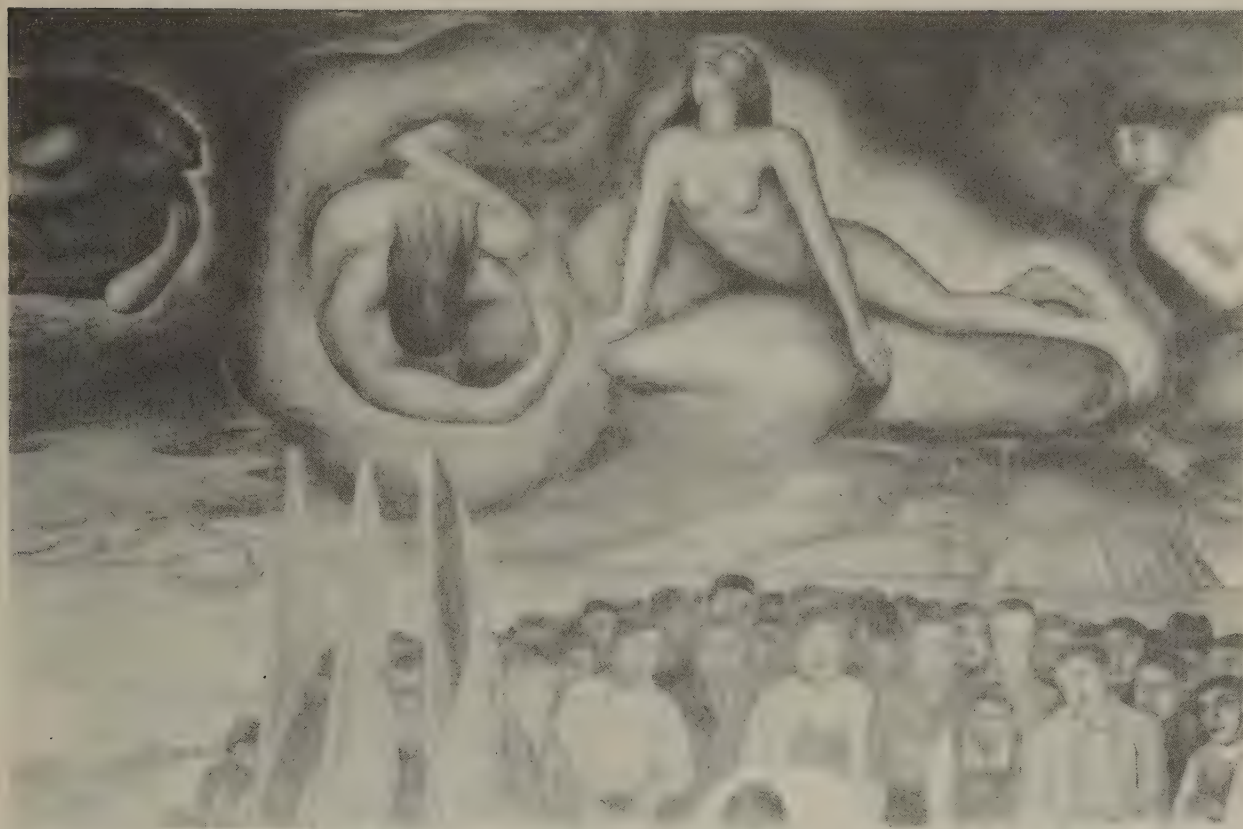
Stairway



THE TRINITY —ARCHITECT, PAINTER AND SCULPTOR



WOMAN OF TEHUANTEPEC



DETAIL — BURIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION



DETAIL—BURIAL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION



THE JUNGLE



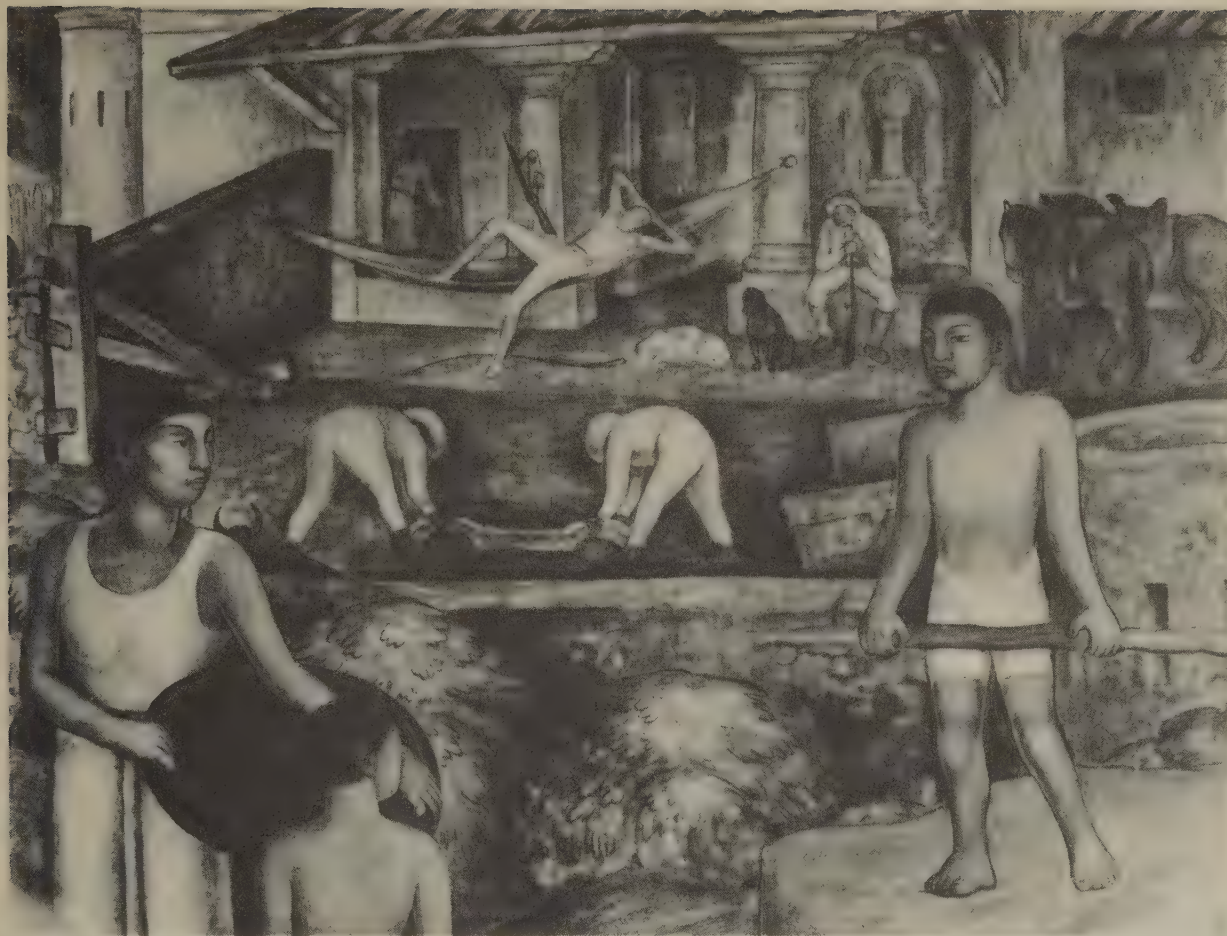
TOWARD ORIZABA



THE LIGHTNING



THE PLATEAU



THE HACIENDADO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MEXICO CITY

Third Gallery



DETAIL FROM THE SONG OF EMILIANO ZAPATA



DETAIL FROM THE SONG OF EMILIANO ZAPATA



THE SONG OF THE REVOLUTION



MEXICAN TYPES



"WHO DOES NOT LOVE THE RAIN"



INDIAN BOY—DETAIL FROM PRECEDING



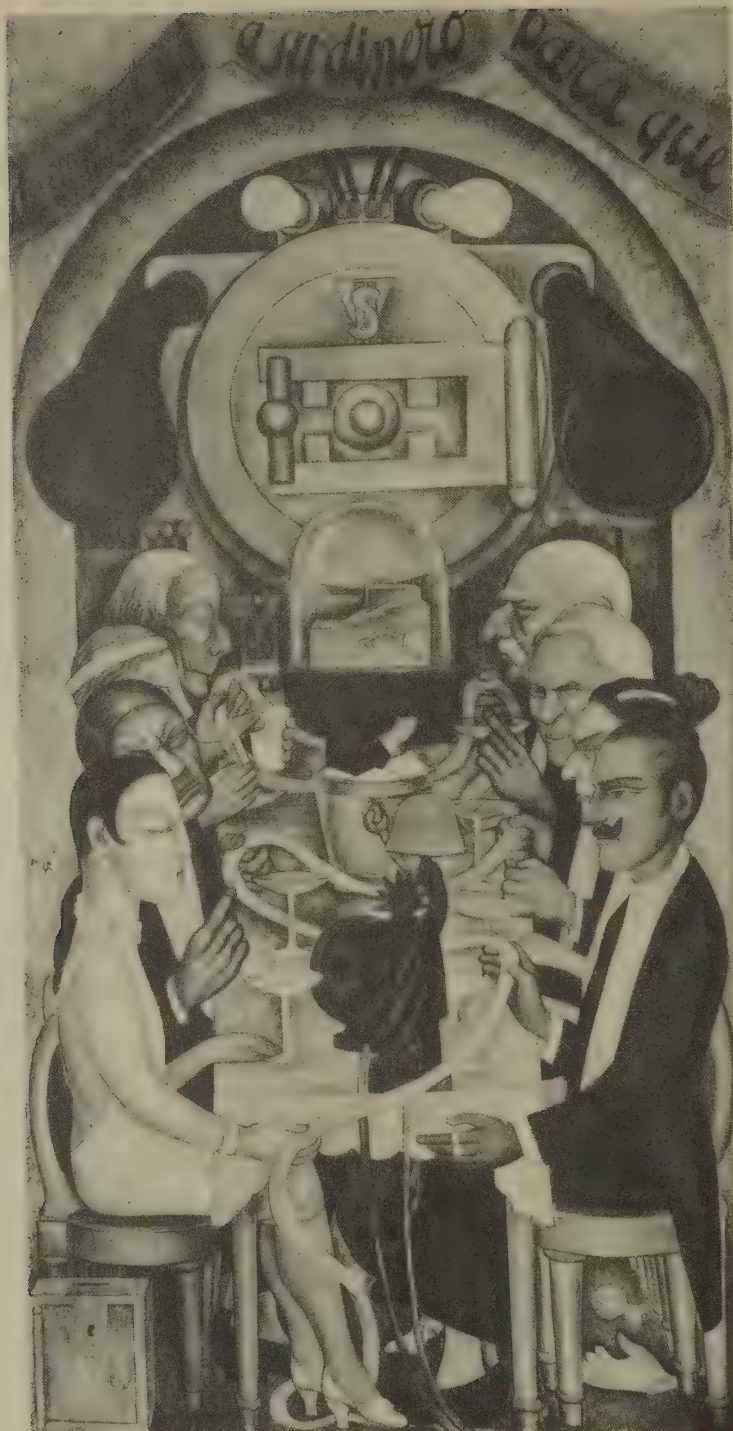
TRACTOR AND HARROW WITH GARLANDS



BOURGEOIS FAMILY



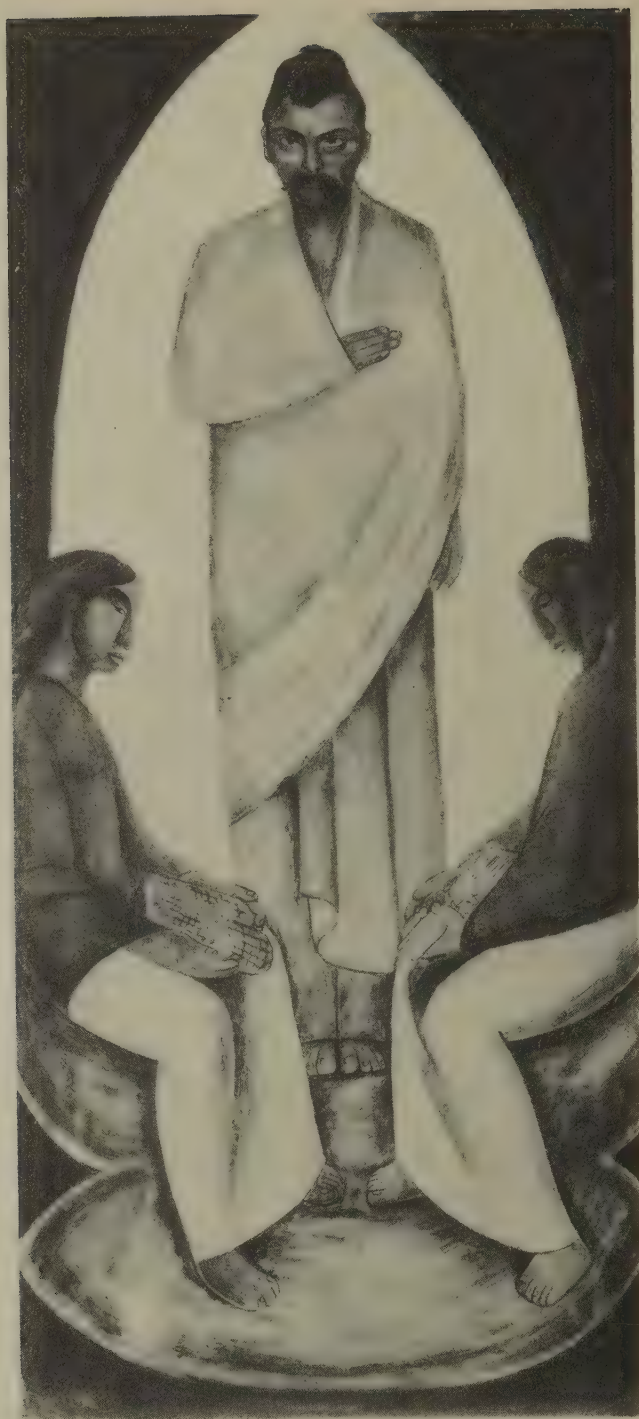
REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS, PEASANTS AND SOLDIERS LAUGH AT THE
EMPTY WORDS OF THE BOURGEOIS REFORMERS



THE BILLIONAIRES (ROCKEFELLER, MORGAN, FORD, AND OTHERS)



DETAIL FROM THE NIGHT OF THE POOR

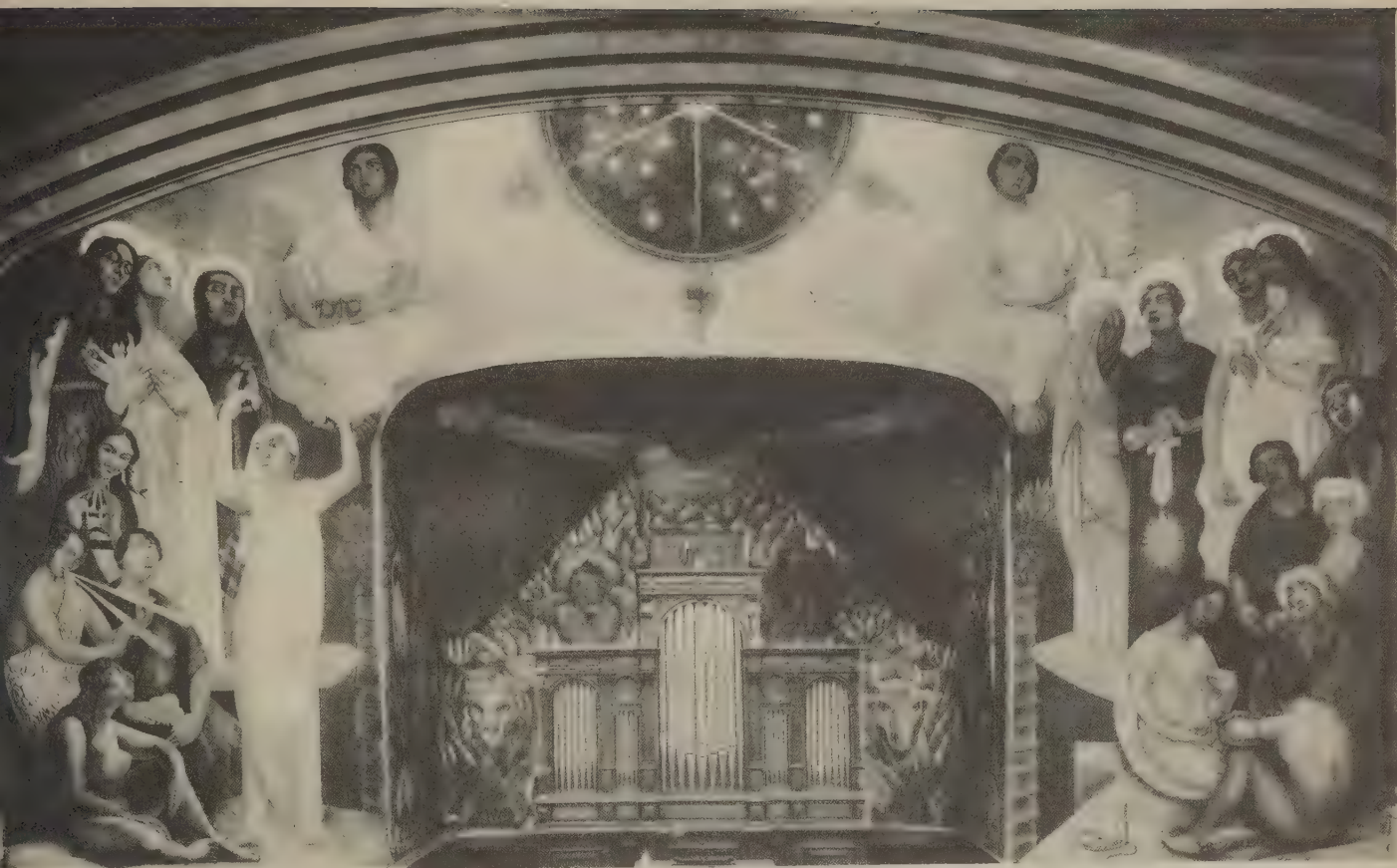


EMILIANO ZAPATA, PEASANT LEADER OF MORELOS



FELIPE CARRILLO PUERTO, MARTYR GOVERNOR OF YUCATAN

NATIONAL PREPARATORY SCHOOL
MEXICO CITY



THE STORY OF CREATION



THE DISTRIBUTION OF

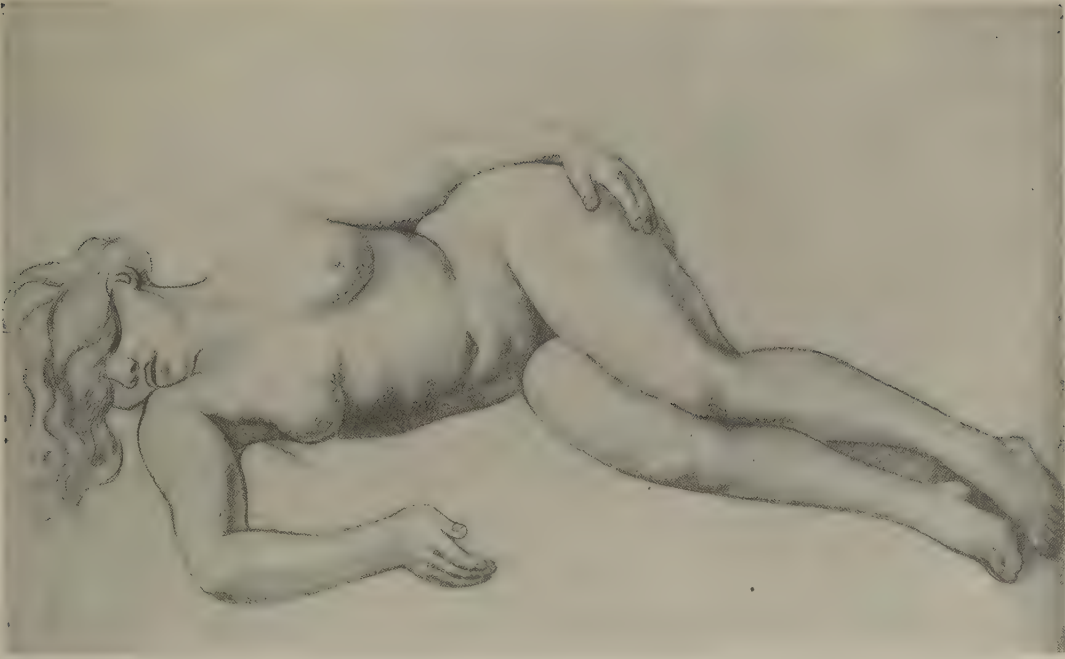


THE LAND TO THE PEASANTS



THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL ACADEMY OF CHAPINGO

THE CHAPEL, VIRGIN SOIL



PRELIMINARY SKETCH FOR VIRGIN SOIL



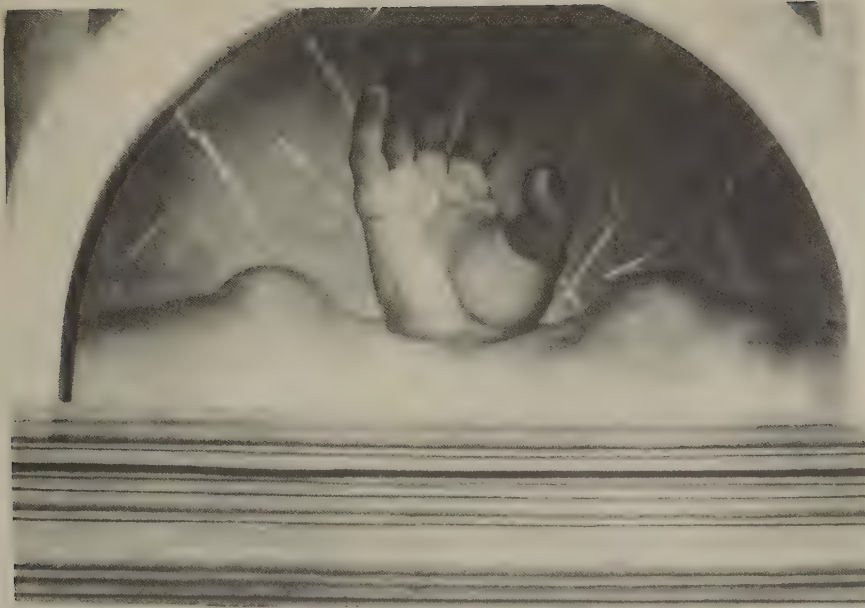
THE EARTH SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES—
PRIEST, IMPERIALIST SOLDIER, AND FALSE LEADER



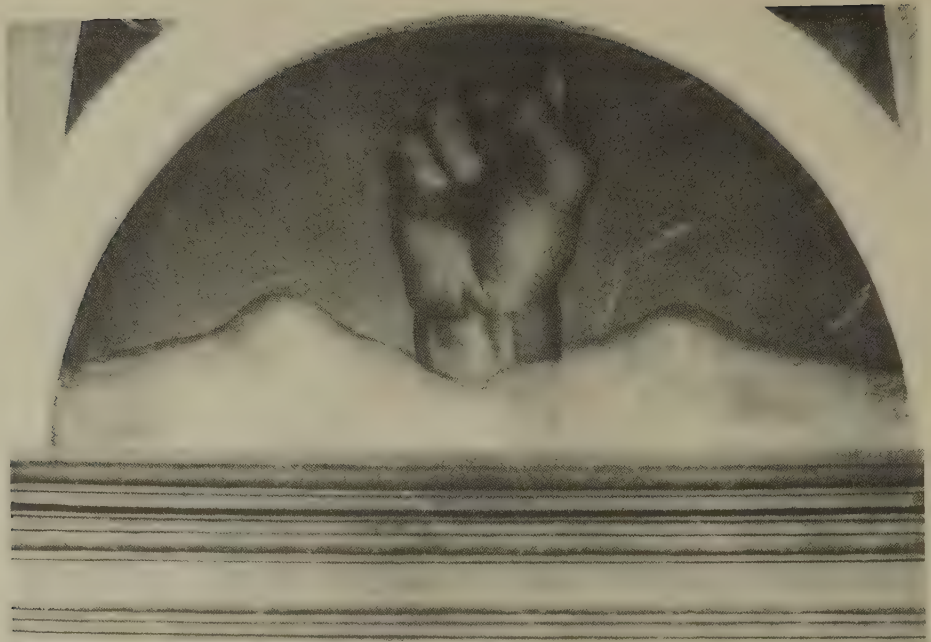
CEILING IN THE CHAPEL AT CHAPINGO



SOCIAL CHAOS—EXPLOITATION OF THE WORKERS



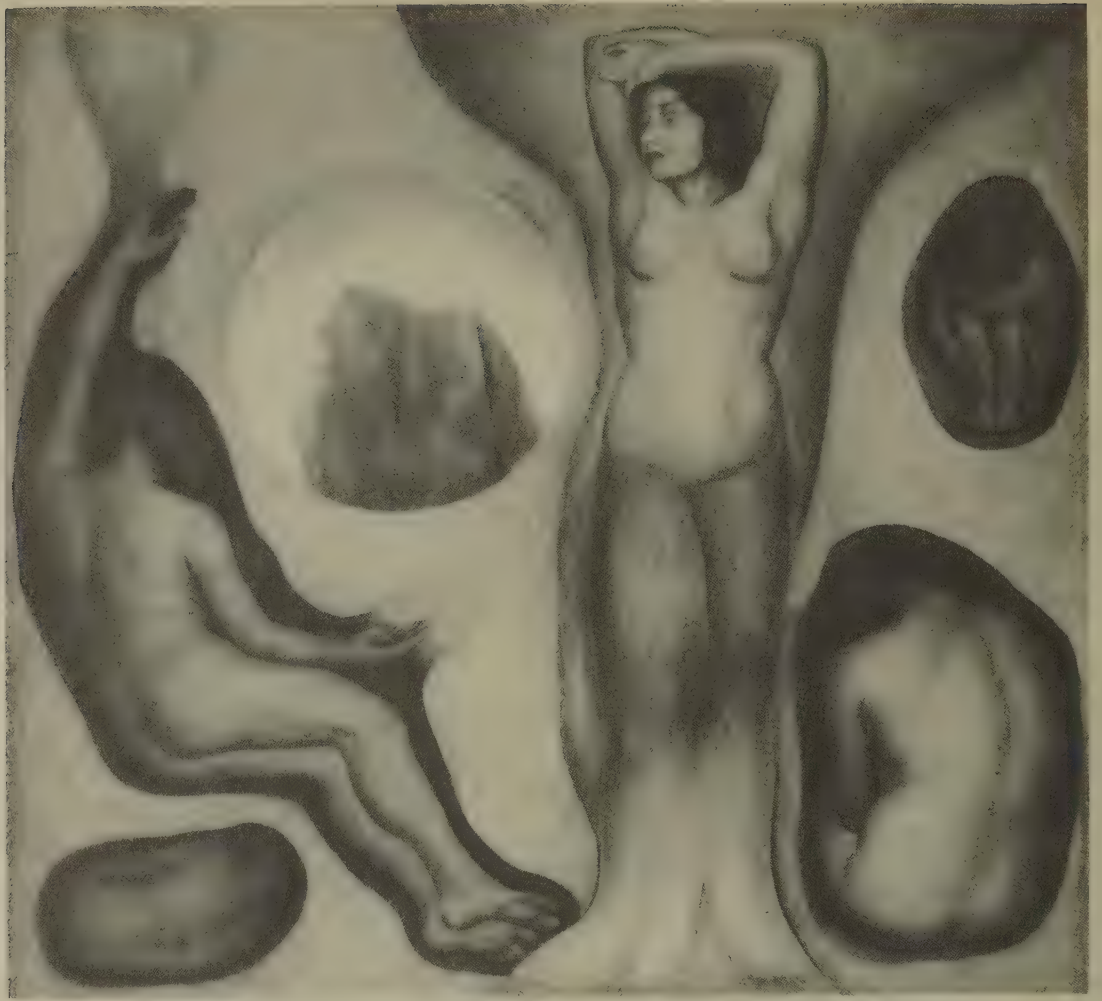
SOCIAL REVOLUTION—AGITATION



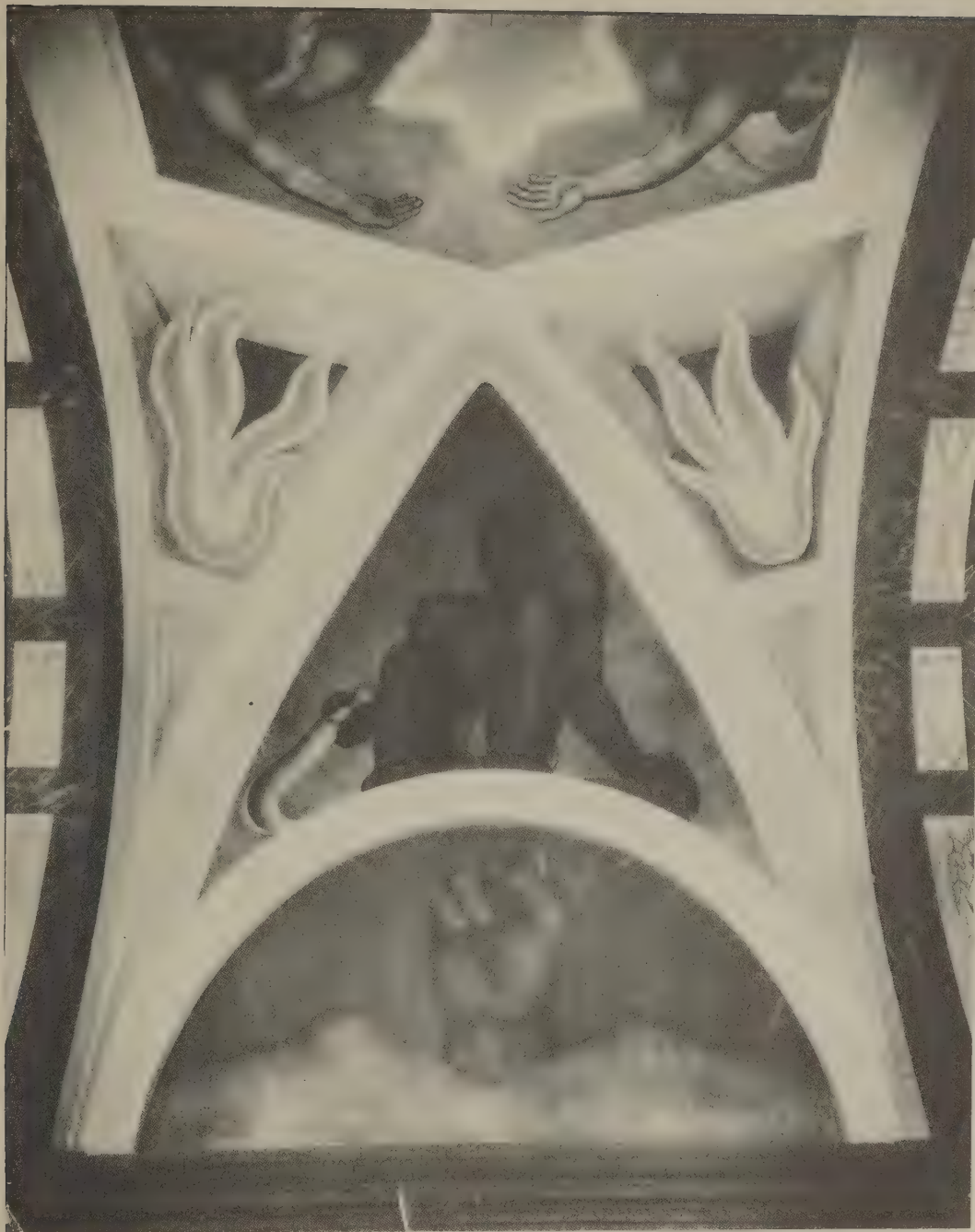
THE MARTYR



BENEDICTION—THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE WORKERS



GERMINATION



CEILING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL AT CHAPINGO



· SKETCH FOR CEILING IN AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL AT CHAPINGO



SKETCH FOR CEILING IN AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL AT CHAPINGO



EARTH LIBERATED

PORTRAITS AND SKETCHES



LUPE



MOTHER AND CHILDREN



SKETCH



PORTRAIT OF A CHILD



ROLLING TORTILLA



MAN'S HEAD



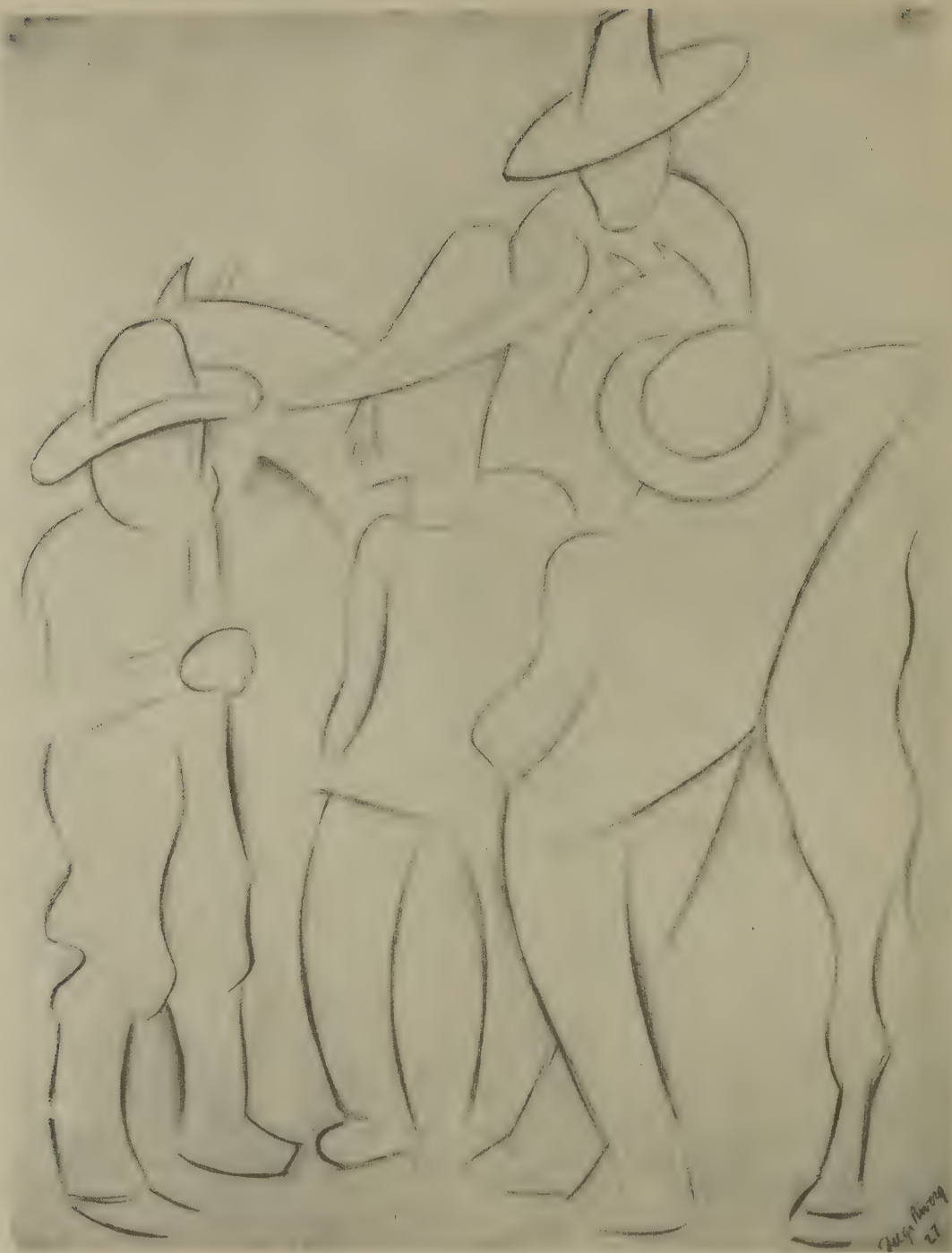
MOTHER AND DAUGHTER



SKETCH



LANDSCAPE



PEONS



FROM THE ITALIAN SKETCHBOOK



FROM THE ITALIAN SKETCHBOOK



MAN WITH A CIGARETTE

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